



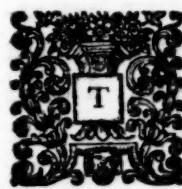
THE
CONNOISSEUR.
By Mr. *T O W N*,
CRITIC and CENSOR-GENERAL.

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THURSDAY, March 28, 1754.

— — — *solvitque animis miracula rerum,*
Eripuitque Jovi fulmen, viresque Tonanti.

MANIL.

HE publication of Lord Bolinbroke's posthumous works has given new life and spirit to Freethinking. We seem at present to be endeavouring to unlearn our Catechism, with all that we have been taught about Religion, in order to model our faith to the fashion of his Lordship's system. We have now nothing to do but to throw away our Bibles, turn the churches into theatres, and rejoice that an act of Parliament now in force gives us an opportunity of getting rid of the Clergy by transportation. I was in hopes that the extraordinary price of these volumes would have confined their influence to persons of quality. As they are placed above extreme indigence and absolute want of bread,

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their loose notions would have carried them no farther than plundering their country: but if these opinions spread among the vulgar, we shall be knocked down at noonday in our streets, and nothing will go forward but robberies and murders.

THE instances I have lately seen of Freethinking in the lower part of the world make me fear they are going to be as fashionable and as wicked as their betters. I went the other night to the *Robin Hood*, where it is usual for the advocates against religion to assemble, and openly avow their infidelity. One of the questions for the night was, "Whether Lord *Bolinbroke* had not done greater service to mankind by his writings than the Apostles or Evangelists?" As this society is chiefly composed of lawyers clerks, petty tradesmen, and the lowest mechanics, I was at first surprised to find such amazing erudition among them. *Toland*, *Tindal*, *Collins*, *Chubb*, and *Mandeville*, they seemed to have got by heart. A shoemaker harangued his five minutes upon the excellence of the tenets maintained by Lord *Bolinbroke*; but I soon found that his reading had not been extended beyond the *Idea of a Patriot King*, which he had mistaken for a glorious system of Freethinking. I could not help smiling at another of the company, who took pains to shew his disbelief of the Gospel by unsainting the Apostles, and calling them by no other title than plain *Paul*, or plain *Peter*. The proceedings of this society have, indeed, almost induced me to wish, that like the Roman Catholics, they were not permitted to read the Bible, rather than they should read it, only to abuse it.

I HAVE frequently heard many wise tradesmen settling the most important articles of our faith over a pint of beer. A baker took occasion from *Canning's* affair to maintain, in opposition

opposition to the Scriptures, that man might live by bread alone, at least that woman might ; for else, said he, how could the girl have been supported for a whole month by a few hard crusts ? In answer to this, a barber-surgeon set forth the improbability of that story, and thence inferred, that it was impossible for our Saviour to have fasted forty days in the wilderness. I lately heard a midshipman swear that the Bible was all a lie : for he had sailed round the world with Lord *Anson*, and if there had been any Red Sea, he must have met with it. I know a bricklayer, who, while he was working by line and rule, and carefully laying one brick upon another, would argue with a fellow-labourer, that the world was made by chance ; and a cook, who thought more of his trade than his bible, in a dispute about the miracles, made a pleasant mistake about the nature of the first, and gravely asked his antagonist what he thought of the SUPPER at *Cana*.

THIS affectation of Freethinking, among the lower class of people, is at present happily confined to the men. On Sundays, while the husbands are tooping at the alehouse, the good women their wives think it their duty to go to church, say their prayers, bring home the text, and read the lessons with their families. But our polite ladies are, I fear, in their lives and conversations little better than Freethinkers. Going to church, since it is now no longer the fashion to carry on intrigues there, is almost wholly laid aside ; and I verily believe, that nothing but another earthquake can ever fill the churches with people of quality. The fair sex in general are too thoughtless to concern themselves in deep enquiries into matters of religion. It is sufficient that they are taught to believe themselves angels : it would therefore be an ill compliment, while we talk of the heaven they bestow, to persuade them into the *Mahometan* notion,

notion, that they have no souls: tho' perhaps our fine gentlemen may imagine, that by convincing a lady she has no soul, she will be less scrupulous about the disposal of her body.

THE ridiculous notions maintained by Freethinkers in their writings scarce deserve a serious refutation; and perhaps the best method of answering them would be to select from their works all the absurd and impossible notions, which they so stiffly maintain in order to evade the belief of the Christian Religion. I shall here throw together a few of their principal tenets under the contradictory title of

The UNBELIEVER'S CREED.

I BELIEVE that there is no God, but that Matter is God, and God is Matter; and that it is no matter whether there is any God or no.

I BELIEVE also that the world was not made; that the world made itself; that it had no beginning; that it will last for ever, world without end.

I BELIEVE that man is a beast; that the soul is the body, and the body the soul; and that after death there is neither body nor soul.

I BELIEVE that there is no religion; that natural religion is the only religion; and that all religion is unnatural.

I BELIEVE not revelation; I believe in tradition, I believe in the Talmud, I believe in the Alcoran, I believe not the Bible: I believe in *Sanconiatbo*, I believe in *Confucius*, I believe in *Mahomet*, I believe not in CHRIST.

LASTLY, I believe in all unbelief.

An Address to both Houses of Parliament.

My Lords and Gentlemen,

EVER since we have thought fit to take these Kingdoms into our immediate Care, We have made it Our earnest Endeavour to go Hand in Hand with Your Wisdoms in promoting

promoting the Welfare and Prosperity of the People. The important Business of Taxes, Marriages, Jews and Lotteries, We have left to Your weighty Consideration, while Ourselves have been employed in the Regulation of Fashions, the Establishment of Taste, and Amendment of the Morals. We have the Satisfaction to find that both Our Measures have hitherto met with Success: And the Public Affairs are at present in so prosperous a Condition, that the National Vices seem as likely to decrease as the National Debt.

THE Dissolution of Your Assembly is now at hand; and as Your whole Attention will naturally be engaged in securing to Yourselves and Friends a Seat in the next Parliament, it is needless to recommend to You, that Heads should be broken, Drunkenness encouraged, and Abuse propagated; which has been found by Experience to be the best Method of supporting the Freedom of Elections. In the mean Time, as the Care of the Nation must be left to Us, it is necessary that during this Interval Our Prerogative, as CENSOR GENERAL, should be considerably extended, and that We should be invested with the united Power of Lords and Commons.

WHEN We are entrusted with this important Charge, We shall expect that every different Faction shall concur in Our Measures for the Public Utility; that Whig and Tory, High Church and Low Church, Court and Country, shall all unite in this Common Cause; and that opposite Parties in the Body Politic, like the Arms and Legs in the Body Natural, shall move in Concert, though they are on different Sides. In Our Papers, which We shall continue to publish every Thursday under the Title of *The CONNOISSEUR*, every Misdemeanor shall be examined, and Offenders called to the Bar of the House. Be it therefore enacted, that these

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Our Orders and Resolutions have an equal Authority with Acts of Parliament, as We doubt not They will be of equal Advantage to the Community.

THE extraordinary Supplies requisite for the Service of the current Weeks, and for the Support of Our Own Privy Purse, oblige Us to demand of You, that a Sum, not exceeding Two-pence, be levied Weekly on each Person, to be collected by Our trusty and well-beloved the Booksellers. We must also particularly request of You, that the same Privilege and Protection be extended to Us which is enjoyed by Yourselves, and is so very convenient to many of your honourable Members. It is no less expedient that We should be secured from Let or Molestation : Be it therefore provided, that no one presume to arrest or cause to be arrested Our Person, or the Persons of Our Publisher, Printer, Corrector, Devil, or any other employed in Our Service.

WE have only to add, that You may rely on Our Care and Diligence in discharging the high Trust reposed in Us, in such Manner as shall merit the Thanks of the next Parliament. We shall then recommend it to Their Consideration, whether it would not be for the Interest of these Kingdoms, that We should have a Woolpack allotted Us with the Bishops, or be allowed a Seat among the Commons, as the Representative of the whole People : But if this should be deemed too great an Honour, it will at least be thought necessary that We should be occasionally called in, like the Judges, to give Our Opinion on Cases of Importance.

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Connoisseur, Critic, and Censor General.